"Twelve Against The Gods" dustjacket

2013)

TWELVE AGAINST THE GODS

The Story of Adventure

by William Bolitho

WITH A FOREWORD BY

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

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What ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT *says in the Foreword:*

To hear William Bolitho talk—and it has been the testimony of such disparate contemporaries as Noel Coward and Walter Duranty that they were always glad to travel many a mile to do just that—to hear Bolitho talk was to listen to one who himself dwelt outside of time. Thus constituted, he could pick up such figures as Alexander and Napoleon, reflectively twisting and turning them in his hand as another man might a puppet.

It was his whim to write brief biographies of the following men and women: Alexander the Great, Casanova, Mahomet, Lola Montez, Cagliostro, Charles XII of Sweden, Napoleon I, Catiline, Napoleon III, Isadora Duncan, Woodrow Wilson. The twelve had this in common, that each was an adventurer who for a little moment out of eternity bestrode the world, a dauntless and single-handed challenger, entering the lists against the lords of chance.

What Bolitho relished most in these lives was that moment of vertigo which seizes each adventurer at his highest point. Bolitho always lingered to watch each of his twelve trapped by his own success.

Whoever encounters TWELVE AGAINST THE GODS for the first time (or, as in my case, for the third) will spend a few unbelievably crowded and tumultuous hours in the company of one of the most vigorous and provocative minds of our age. He will pick up many fascinating oddments of historical information, will accumulate in the process much food for thought and will emerge from the experience with the slightly dishevelled feeling of having been tossed in a blanket.